

DPH, DNREC Join Sen. Carper to Announce Zika Funding for Delaware

SMYRNA – Today, U.S. Senator Tom Carper (D-Del.) joined Delaware Division of Public Health Director Dr. Karyl Rattay and Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control Secretary David Small to announce \$813,000 in federal funding to help Delaware's efforts to prevent and respond to the Zika virus. Zika, a generally mild illness, has been linked to serious birth defects in Brazil and other countries and is most often spread by mosquitoes, including a species found in Delaware.

Much of the funding announced today came from an Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) grant for \$1.7 million, a grant the state receives annually from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This year's ELC's grant of \$543,000 is to be used for fighting Zika and West Nile Virus. The second grant, also from CDC and called the Public Health Emergency Preparedness grant, targets Zika specifically and provides \$270,000 for such a campaign.

The grants will fund additional Zika education, outreach and advertising, data tracking, lab testing expenses, disease surveillance, planning, personnel, and preparedness. Funding will also be used to conduct Zika workshops and a table-top exercise, and help provide Zika kits for pregnant women, and their related needs. The ELC grant will help fund a new epidemiologist for DPH and a part-time physician to examine infants.

About \$166,000 of the grant funding announced today will assist DNREC's mosquito control and surveillance efforts, which are crucial in a fight against the Zika virus.

While this funding will go toward Zika and other mosquito-related research, funding for additional Zika research – including development of a vaccine – public education, outreach, and wider contraception availability is needed to stop this growing crisis.

“Today we had a chance to see firsthand the work Delaware is doing to prevent the spread of the Zika virus and the plans in place to respond to this kind of public health crisis,” said U.S. Sen. Tom Carper. “While this initial funding is much-needed, when Congress returns from recess in September, it’s absolutely critical that we pass emergency funding to help stem the tide of this burgeoning health crisis.”

“The Division of Public Health has worked on the Zika issue for months, and we are ready, we are prepared,” said DPH Director Dr. Karyl T. Rattay. “Following guidance by the CDC, DPH has organized a Zika Action Team comprised of individuals with expertise in infectious disease, epidemiology, maternal and child health, lab testing, communications, mosquito control and emergency preparedness. The new funding will help DPH continue to implement the action team’s plan.”

DNREC’s share of grant funding “will greatly enhance our efforts to raise awareness among Delawareans about how they can reduce mosquito populations around their homes, boost our response capability to more effectively implement localized controls and improve our ability to monitor mosquito populations around the state,” said DNREC Secretary David Small. “We greatly appreciate the current and past efforts of Senator Carper and our congressional delegation to support programs to protect public health and the environment.”

Following the funding announcement, DNREC Mosquito Control Administrator Dr. Bill Meredith and Program Manager Tom Moran demonstrated actions homeowners can take to reduce backyard mosquito-producing habitat. The Asian tiger mosquito (*Aedes albopictus*), widely found throughout Delaware including on

many residential properties, carries West Nile virus and can possibly transmit Zika, too. This species lays its eggs around the home where standing water can accumulate – clogged rain gutters, abandoned swimming pools and most importantly, any container that can hold water, such as flower pot liners, cans, scrap tires, wheelbarrows and uncovered trash cans. Due to this species' habitats and behaviors, controlling the ATM solely with insecticides has been challenging. Reducing Asian tiger populations around the home by preventing or eliminating larval habitat is critical for reducing their bites and the possible transmission of mosquito-borne diseases.

Delaware Public Health and DNREC both provide fact sheets on the Zika Virus, as found [here](#).

Travel and Transmission Advisories

- If you are pregnant, postpone travel to the countries where Zika virus transmission is ongoing. If your sexual partner has traveled to or lives in an area with active Zika virus transmission, barrier methods (condoms, dental dams) should be used for the duration of the pregnancy. Although no cases of woman-to-woman Zika transmission have been reported to date, these recommendations regarding the use of protection now extend to the female partners of pregnant women. Discuss your partner's potential exposures and history of Zika-like illness with your doctor.
- If you are trying to become pregnant and have been diagnosed with Zika virus or have symptoms of Zika, wait at least eight weeks after symptoms first appeared before trying to conceive. Men who have been diagnosed with Zika virus or have symptoms are advised to wait at least six months after symptoms first appeared before having vaginal, oral, or anal unprotected sex.
- Men and women who do not have symptoms of Zika but had possible exposure through recent travel or sexual contact should wait at least eight weeks after possible

exposure before trying to conceive in order to minimize risk.

- If your partner lives in an area with active Zika transmission but has not developed symptoms, use barrier methods for sex while there is active Zika virus transmission in the area. Sex includes vaginal, anal, and oral sex, and may also include the sharing of sex toys.
- If you are pregnant or may become pregnant and must travel to an area with Zika, talk to your doctor first and strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during your trip. If you traveled to an area with active Zika virus transmission up to eight weeks before your pregnancy was confirmed, discuss your travel history with your doctor.

About one in five people infected with the virus develop the disease, and most people who are infected do not develop symptoms. The most common symptoms of Zika virus are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). Symptoms typically begin two to seven days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

To report a potential Zika illness or receive further guidance on patient testing, call the DPH Office of Infectious Disease Epidemiology at 302-744-4990. For copies of flyers and more educational tools, visit the DPH Zika page: dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/zika.html.

To reduce the risk of mosquito bites, use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered insect repellents; stay in places with air conditioning or that use window or door screens to keep mosquitoes outside; sleep under a mosquito bed net if you are outside and not able to protect yourself from mosquitoes; treat clothing and gear with permethrin available in pharmacies or purchase permethrin-treated items; and wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.

To learn more about how to reduce mosquitoes around your home, two videos with information about Zika virus and backyard water sanitation tips also are available on DNREC's YouTube Channel: [Zika Virus, Mosquitoes & You](#), and [Mosquito Control & Your Backyard](#).

To report intolerable numbers of biting mosquitoes and request local relief, residents are encouraged to call Mosquito Control's field offices:

- Glasgow Office, 302-836-2555, serving New Castle County and the northern half of Kent County, including Dover
- Milford Office, 302-422-1512, serving the southern half of Kent County south of Dover and all of Sussex County
- For more information about Delaware's Mosquito Control program, call the field offices or the main Dover office at 302-739-9917, or visit de.gov/mosquito.

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit delawarerelay.com.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.

Media Contacts:

- **Department of Health and Social Services**

Rita Landgraf, Secretary

Jill Fredel, Director of Communications

302-255-9047, Cell 302-357-7498

Email: jill.fredel@delaware.gov

- **Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control**

Melanie Rapp, DNREC Public Affairs

302-739-9902; cell: 302-233-1294

Email: Melanie.Rapp@delaware.gov

- **Senator Tom Carper**

Katie Wilson (Sen. Carper)

302-598-4915

Email: Katie_Wilson@carper.senate.gov